

**Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary
Andrews University**

**A STATEMENT ON THE BIBLICAL
DOCTRINE OF CREATION**

Voted by the Seminary Faculty on April 30, 2010

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A STATEMENT ON THE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF CREATION

Preamble

The year 2009 marked not only the 150th

dialogue regarding differing worldviews such as a recent biblical Creation model contrasted with an ancient life on earth model. The document concludes by focusing on

We believe that the doctrine of Creation fits into an overarching Creation worldview formulated by the Bible that informs other interrelated doctrines such as, but not limited to, the Sabbath, the Fall, salvation, the Flood, eschatology, and ethics. Above all, and as noted below, a proper understanding of origins preserves the integrity of Scripture, safeguards the loving character of God, and establishes the reality of redemption and the hope of a new Creation. These reasons show why a biblical Creation worldview matters.

The Creation Week

Motivated freely by unfathomable love and with great joy, God created the first life forms to appear on Earth recently, culminating with creatures bearing His own image, while beings in an already existing universe shouted with joyous approval (Gen 1-2; 5; 11; 1 Chr 1:1-27; Job 38:4-7; Pss 33:5-6, 8-9; 146:5-6; 148:5; Prov 8; Matt 1; Luke 3; John 1:1-18; Col 1:16-17).⁸ God created peacefully by calling life forms into existence over the span of one historical week composed of six ordinary, historical Earth days like our own, followed by one day of rest (Gen 1 and 2; Exod 20:11; 31:17; Heb 4:4; 11:3; Rev 14:7). This method of Creation shows that God is love and worthy of worship (Rev 14:7). Thus, on the one hand, the days of Creation were not mythical, symbolic, metaphorical, functional,⁹ or kairological days.¹⁰ Neither, on the other hand, were the days of Creation so-called divine days in which each of the six days allegedly translates into multi-millions of Earth years totaling approximately 3.8 billion years.¹¹ If true, these long-age approaches to origins involve God in an unseemly means-end approach. According to these lengthy methods, He creates livi

natural sciences and the biblical doctrine of Creation. Our understanding of the relation between the two fields of discourse follows below.

Scientific Methodologies and Scriptural Interpretation

We have deep respect for the natural sciences and the work of our colleagues in these fields. We also appreciate the fact that students in Adventist education are trained how to employ scientific methodologies. At the same time, and along with our other colleagues in academia, we do not restrict our quest for truth to the constraints imposed by scientific methodologies alone. We believe that there are other methods outside scientific methodologies for discerning truth.

We believe that the scientist who is a believing Christian will be open to evidence that points toward possible or even probable non-natural causation. However, we reject metaphysical materialism, which claims that all reality can be explained without reference to the originating and sustaining power and wisdom of God. On the contrary, we believe, for example, that the origin of space, time, energy, matter, the laws and constants of nature, and life itself are not the result of spontaneous generation or self-actualization, but exist due to the originating action of divine design and power and to the continuing sustaining power of God (John 1:1; Col 2:17-18). Thus, as Adventists, we believe in divine reality beyond materialism.

In addition, we do not seek to prove by human reason and science the reality of God. Rather, through the eyes of faith we thank God for revealing the love, wisdom, and power of God through the visible things He has created (Rom 1:18-20).

When conflicting interpretations of scientific data and Scripture arise, we

master mind, they cannot but speak in harmony” when both are properly interpreted.¹³ If, after carefully re-investigating the Word of God and the empirical data on any point in question, we determine that an interpretation of the Scripture that harmonizes with a particular claim of conventional science is not possible without changing the clearly intended meaning of Scripture, we willingly defer to the teaching of God’s Word. We do so with the conviction that further research may resolve the apparent conflict (Col 2:8; 1 Tim 6:20; 2 Cor 10:5). We believe that the Scriptures must always be given first preference, because we hold that they are the perfect standard of truth.

Macro-Evolution, Micro-Evolution, and Creation

We believe with the Psalmist that humans are among the wonderful works of God (Ps 139:14) made with divine wisdom (Ps 104:24). Thus, in contrast to attempts to harmonize the biblical narrative with contemporary evolutionary science, the traditional understanding of biblical Creation seems to harmonize most easily with a straightforward reading of the early chapters of Genesis and is more easily consonant with the doctrines of the Fall, redemption, and the Sabbath.

In this connection, we believe that Charles Darwin uncovered the empirically verifiable actuality of micro-evolution, which occurs through mechanisms such as random change and natural selection over time. However, we differ with the evolutionary synthesis regarding the alleged adequacy of macro-evolutionary theory. For example, not only do we believe that life cannot exist apart from God, we also are aware of biological data which prompt us to question the macro-evolutionary claim of the absolute natural origin of life and living forms from non-living matter (spontaneous abiogenesis). For similar reasons, we also question the macro-evolutionary claim of the development of simple life forms ultimately into human beings wholly by random

Our belief that major portions of the fossil-filled geologic column were deposited

Gen 1 and 2 with evolutionary theory, creates intractable problems of theodicy regarding the loving character of the Creator who, allegedly, creates through the warring of nature, famine, and death.¹⁷ Philosopher of science, David Hull, explains how this worldview impacts fatally upon the character of God: “The process [of evolution] is rife with happenstance, contingency, incredible waste, death, pain and horror. . . . The god implied by evolutionary theory and the data of natural history . . . is not a loving God who cares about His productions. He is . . . careless, indifferent, almost diabolical. He is certainly not the sort of God to whom anyone would be inclined to pray.”¹⁸ These telling remarks can deepen the conviction that surely the infinitely loving Creator would not create by means of a phenomenon which He abhors, and that He died on the cross to eradicate, namely, death, which is the last enemy (2 Tim 1:10; 1 Cor 15:26). Such considerations show how a correct understanding of the biblical teaching about origins safeguards the truth about the goodness and love of God, which we believe is the foundational truth of all Scripture (Deut 32:3-4; 1 John 4:8).

3. *Salvation through Christ.* Faith in the blood of Jesus is the heart of the gospel (Rom 3:25). In opposition to this, the evolutionary worldview affirms death before sin by rejecting a historical, literal Fall, a global Flood, and a historical Adam and Eve through whom sin and its consequences passed to Creation, including the lower creatures. This consequence undermines the biblical truth that sin causes death, thereby ultimately denying the need for Jesus to redeem humanity through His historical life and His death on the cross (Gen 2:9, 17; Rom 5:12, 14; 6:23; 8:20-21; 1 Cor 15:26). Thus, the true biblical doctrines of Creation and a global Flood safeguard the doctrine of the substitutionary atonement.¹⁹

4. *The Sabbath.* The Sabbath was made for humans (Mark 2:27). When and for what reason? As indicated in this document, the first chapter of Genesis teaches that during the week of Creation, the seventh day was established as the Sabbath as a perpetual memorial of the completion of God's creative work (Gen 1; Exod 20:11). If life forms have emerged slowly on Earth over millions of years, clearly this foundational biblical reason for the establishment of the Sabbath is fatally compromised.

5. *Eschatology.* The same Creator who said "For in six days the Lord made heaven and the earth" (Exod 20:11) also said "Let not your heart be troubled . . . I will come again." (John 14:1-3). The Christian's hope is grounded in these latter words of Jesus. However, if science falsifies Christ's protological statement, what confidence can the believer place in His eschatological promise of a glorious second coming (2 Pet 3)? This shows the importance of the historical truth of the biblical doctrine of Creation.

In summary, these five reasons join together to form powerful evidence showing

However, in spite of human sin, our Earth is a resource that must be treasured by us who are its stewards. As Christians, we have a thrilling cause or mission, which is to restore, to the extent possible, the glory of God in all His creation, here and now. Caring for and preserving the environment calls for submission to the Creator and suggests that our economic goals should be subservient to a responsible use of the resources God has provided. For example, the Sabbath doctrine (Exod 20:8-11; Deut 5:12-15) teaches conservation by requiring restraint in the exploitation of resources. This was made dramatically clear in the biblical teaching regarding the Sabbatical and the Jubilee years when the land was left fallow. The observance was called the “rest of the land” (Lev 25:1-7).

It is the privilege of the Christian to celebrate and enjoy the beauty and the goodness of the Earth, to find relationship with our God through His Creation, and to love the crowning work of His hands, our human brothers and sisters in this Creation.

ENDNOTES

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¹⁶ For a well-documented discussion showing that the authors of Gen 1 and 2 intended to articulate a factual, historical account of God's creative action during the week of Creation, see Alvin Plantinga, "Evolution, Neutrality, and Antecedent Probability: A Reply to McMullin and Van Till," in *Intelligent Design Creationism and Its Critics: Phi*

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